A SHORT HISTORY OF METHODISM.

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A SHORT HISTORY OF METHODISM.

1. IT is not eaſy to reckon up the various Accounts which have been given of the People called *Methodiſts:* Very many of them as far remote from Truth, as that given by the good Gentleman in *Ireland.* "*Methodiſts!* Ay, they are the People, who "place all Religion in *wearing long Beards.*"

2. Abundance of the Miſtakes which are current concerning them, have undoubtedly ſprung from this: Men lump together under this general Name many who have no man-

ner of Connexion with each other: And then whatever any of theſe ſpeaks or does, is of courſe imputed to all.

3. The following ſhort Account may prevent Perſons of a calm and candid Diſpoſition from doing this: Although Men of a warm or prejudiced Spirit will do juſt as they did before. But let it be obſerved, this is not deſigned for a *Defence* of the *Methodiſts* (ſo called) or any Part of them. It is a bare *Relation* of a Series of naked Facts, which alone may remove Abundance of Miſunderſtandings.

In *November* 1729, four young Gentlemen of *Oxford*, Mr. *John Weſley*, Fellow of *Lincoln* College, Mr. *Charles Weſley*, Student of *Chriſtchurch*, Mr. *Morgan*, Commoner of *Chriſtchurch*, and Mr. *Kirkham*, of *Merton* College, began to ſpend ſome Evenings in a Week together, in reading, chiefly the *Greek Teſtament*. The next Year, two or three of Mr. *John Weſley's* Pupils deſired the Liberty of meeting with them: And afterwards one of Mr. *Charles Weſley's* Pupils. It was in 1732 that Mr. *Ingham*, of *Queen's* College, and Mr. *Broughton*, of *Exeter*, were added to their Number. To theſe, in *April*, was joined Mr. *Clayton*, of *Brazen-noſe*, with two or three of his Pupils. About the ſame time Mr.

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James Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and in 1735 Mr. *Whitefield.*

5. The exact Regularity of their Lives, as well as Studies, occaſioned a young Gentleman of *Chriſtchurch* to ſay, "Here is a "new Set of *Methodiſts* ſprung up:" Alluding to ſome antient Phyſicians who were ſo called. The Name was new and quaint: So it took immediately, and the *Methodiſts* were known all over the Univerſity.

6. They were all zealous Members of the Church of *England*, not only tenacious of all her Doctrines, ſo far as they knew them, but of all her Diſcipline, to the minuteſt Circumſtance. They were likewiſe zealous Obſervers of all the Univerſity-Statutes, and that for Conſcience Sake. But they obſerved neither theſe nor any Thing elſe any further than they conceived it was bound upon them by their one Book, *The Bible*; it being their one Deſire and Deſign to be downright *Bible Chriſtians:* Taking the Bible, as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their whole and ſole Rule.

7. The one Charge then advanced againſt them was, That they were *righteous overmuch*; that they were abundantly too ſcrupulous, and too ſtrict, carrying Things to great Extremes.

In particular, that they laid too much Stress upon the Rubrics and Canons of the Church; that they insisted too much on observing the Statutes of the University; and that they took the Scriptures in too strict and literal a Sense: So that if they were right, *few* indeed would *be saved*.

8. In *October* 1735, Mr. *John* and *Charles Wesley*, and Mr. *Ingham*, left *England*, with a Design to go and preach to the *Indians* in *Georgia*. But the rest of the Gentlemen continued to meet, till one and another was ordained and left the University. By which Means, in about two Years Time, scarce any of them were left.

9. In *February* 1738, Mr. *Whitefield* went over to *Georgia*, with a Design to assist Mr. *John Wesley*; but Mr. *Wesley* just then returned to *England*. Soon after he had a Meeting with Messr. *Ingham*, *Stonhouse*, *Hall*, *Hutchings*, *Kinchin*, and a few other Clergymen, who all appeared to be of one Heart, as well as of one Judgment, resolved to be *Bible-Christians* at all Events, and, wherever they were, to preach with all their Might, plain, old, Bible-Christianity.

10. They were hitherto perfectly regular in all Things, and zealously attached to the

Church of *England*. Meantime they began to be convinced, that *by Grace we are ſaved through Faith*; that Juſtification by Faith was the Doctrine of the Church, as well as of the Bible. As ſoon as they *believed*, they *ſpake*, Salvation by Faith being now their ſtanding Topic. Indeed this implied three Things, 1. That Men are all by Nature *dead in Sin*, and conſequently *Children of Wrath*. 2. That they are *juſtified by Faith* alone. 3. That Faith produces inward and outward Holineſs. And theſe Points they inſiſted on, Day and Night. In a ſhort Time, they became popular Preachers. The Congregations were large wherever they preached. The former Name was then revived. And all theſe Gentlemen, with their Followers, were intitled *Methodiſts*.

11. In *March* 1741, Mr. *Whiteſield* being returned to *England*, entirely ſeparated from Mr. *Weſley* and his Friends, "Becauſe he "did not hold *the Decrees*." Here was the firſt Breach, which warm Men perſuaded Mr. *Whiteſield* to make, merely for a Difference of Opinion. Thoſe indeed who believed *Univerſal Redemption*, had no Deſire at all to ſeparate. But thoſe who held *Particular Redemption*, would not hear of any Accommodation, being determined to have no Fellowſhip with Men that "were in ſo dan-

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" gerous Errors." So there were now two Sorts of *Methodiſts*, ſo called; thoſe for *Particular*, and thoſe for *General*, Redemption.

12. Not many Years paſſed, before *William Cudworth* and *James Relly* ſeparated from Mr. *Whitefield*. Theſe were properly *Antinomians*, abſolute, avowed Enemies to the Law of GOD, which they never preached or profeſſed to preach, but termed all *Legaliſts* who did. With them, *preaching the Law* was an Abomination. They had *nothing to do* with the Law. They would *preach Chriſt*, as they called it; but without one Word either of Holineſs or good Works. Yet theſe were ſtill denominated *Methodiſts*, although differing from Mr. *Whitefield*, both in Judgment and Practice, abundantly more than Mr. *Whitefield* did from Mr. *Weſley*.

13. In the mean time, Mr. *Venn* and Mr. *Romaine* began to be ſpoken of: And not long after, Mr. *Madan* and Mr. *Berridge*, with a few other Clergymen, who, although they had no Connexion with each other, yet preaching *Salvation by Faith*, and endeavouring to live accordingly, to be *Bible-Chriſtians*, were ſoon included in the general Name of *Methodiſts*. And ſo indeed were all others who preached *Salvation by Faith*, and appeared more *ſerious* than their Neighbours.

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Some of theſe were quite *regular* in their Manner of Preaching: Some were quite *irregular* (though not by Choice; but Neceſſity was laid upon them; they muſt preach *irregularly*, or not at all): And others were between both; regular in *moſt*, though not in *all* Particulars.

14. In 1762, *George Bell*, and a few other Perſons, began to ſpeak great Words. In the latter End of the Year, they foretold, that the World would be at an End on the 28th of *February*. Mr. *Weſley*, with whom they were then connected, withſtood them both in public and private. This they would not endure: So, in *January* and *February* 1763, they ſeparated from him, under the Care of Mr. *Maxfield*, one of Mr. *Weſley's* Preachers. But ſtill Mr. *Maxfield* and his Adherents, even the wildeſt *Enthuſiaſts* among them, go under the general Name of *Methodiſts*, and ſo bring a Scandal upon thoſe with whom they have no Connexion.

15. At preſent, thoſe who remain with Mr. *Weſley*, are moſtly *Church* of *England* Men. They love her Articles, her Homilies, her Liturgy, her Diſcipline, and unwillingly vary from it in any Inſtance. Meantime, all who preach among them declare, *We are all by Nature Children of Wrath.* But *by Grace*

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we are ſaved through Faith: Saved both from the Guilt and from the Power of Sin. They endeavour to *live* according to what they preach, to be plain, *Bible-Chriſtians.* And they meet together at convenient Times, to encourage one another therein. They tenderly love many that are *Calviniſts*, though they do not love their Opinions. Yea, they love the *Antinomians* themſelves; but it is with a Love of Compaſſion only. For they hate their Doctrines with a perfect Hatred; they abhor them as they do Hell-fire: Being convinced nothing can ſo effectually deſtroy all Faith, all Holineſs, and all good Works.

16. With regard to theſe, Mr. *Relly* and his Adherents, it would not be ſtrange, if they ſhould grow into Reputation. For they will never ſhock the World, either by the Harſhneſs of their Doctrine, or the Singularity of their Behaviour. But let thoſe who determine both to preach and to live the Goſpel, expect that Men will *ſay all manner of Evil of them. The Servant is not above his Maſter, nor the Diſciple above his Lord. If then they have called the Maſter of the Houſe Beelzebub, how much more them of his Houſehold?* It is their Duty indeed, *as much as lieth in them, to live peaceably with all Men.* But when they labour after Peace, the World will

will *make themſelves ready for Battle.* It is their conſtant Endeavour, to *pleaſe all Men, for their Good, to Edification.* But yet they know, it cannot be done: They remember the Word of the Apoſtle, *If I yet pleaſe Men, I am not the Servant of Chriſt.* They go on therefore, *through Honour and Diſhonour, through evil Report and good Report:* Deſiring only, that their Maſter may ſay in That Day, " Servants of GOD, well done."

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